

# Peterborough Regional College

Inspection report

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

#### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. Peterborough Regional College is a large general further education college. It serves the city of Peterborough and the surrounding areas. The main campus is located close to the city centre and there are two smaller sites. The college's mission is to achieve 'success in a caring college'.
2. In 2006/07, the college enrolled 6,017 full-time and 6,674 part-time students; approximately 55% of students are adults. The college has around 400 work-based learners predominantly in construction, engineering and hairdressing, and 292 learners aged 14 to 16 attending vocational courses. The college has three Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in construction, manufacturing, and leadership and management which are run in partnership with other colleges in the region.
3. Peterborough has a population of around 163,000. Some 23% of students at the college are of minority ethnic heritage, higher than the local community. A growing number of white minority learners are enrolling at the college from Eastern European countries. The area served by the college has some significant pockets of deprivation as well as more affluent wards. The number of people claiming unemployment benefit is higher than that nationally.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Inadequate: contributory grade 4</i>

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grades:*

*Work-based learning*

*Good: grade 2*

*Learners aged 14 to 16*

*Good: grade 2*

4. Peterborough Regional College is a satisfactory and inclusive college. The college's performance, which declined following the last inspection, has improved strongly in more recent years. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates increased between 2004/05 and 2006/07, particularly for learners aged 16 to 18. Success rates in 2006/07 were similar to comparable colleges with the exception of long level 1 courses for adults and for most minority ethnic groups. In-year college data for 2007/08 indicate high and improving retention, attendance and modular examination results. Success rates for work-based learning were high.
5. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning have improved and are mostly good or better, particularly in vocational lessons. The identification and provision of additional learning support are very good, although teachers do not always use the results of initial assessments effectively to plan learning.
6. The range of programmes and progression routes to meet the needs of learners is good. The college's response to social and educational inclusion is good. The college has some very effective strategies to widen participation, attracting students often under-represented in education. Links with employers and other external organisations are strong.
7. Support and guidance are satisfactory overall. They are good for work-based learners and learners aged 14 to 16. The use of teaching assistants to support learners is very effective. However, the quality of group tutorials is mixed and individual learning targets in progress reviews are often too vague.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but good for work-based learning and provision for learners aged 14 to 16. Financial management is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity is inadequate. The college does not meet all of its legislative requirements.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

9. The college's capacity to improve is good. Managers have strengthened the quality assurance procedures and they carefully monitor the good quality improvement plan. Course review and evaluation are good with a more rigorous use of data by middle managers. These developments over the last two years have led to a marked improvement in success rates. In-year college data show a continued trend of improvement across a wide range of indicators. The college use the largely accurate self-assessment report effectively as a tool to

drive improvement. Resources are good and carefully deployed to support improvement. The management structure of the college has been strengthened by the addition of a number of key posts. The college exceeded its funding targets in 2005/06 and 2006/07.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

10. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Retention rates are improving and comparable to similar colleges. Staff development has taken place to improve teaching strategies effectively. The analysis of data aimed at improving standards is much more college wide. The college has not been sufficiently rigorous in addressing issues with targets to monitor students' progress and to improve their performance. The effectiveness of steps taken to improve work-based learning provision since the last inspection is good.

### Key strengths

- high success rates on work-based learning programmes
- good partnership working with employers, other providers and external organisations
- good provision for work-based learning and learners aged 14 to 16
- good range of courses and progression routes
- identification of and provision for additional learning support
- good financial management.

### Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- success rates for adults on level 1 programmes
- success rates for most minority ethnic heritage groups
- the use of initial assessment in the planning of teaching and learning
- the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of individual learning targets and effectiveness of tutorials
- the compliance with equalities legislation and promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity.

## Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grades:*

*Work-based learning*

*Good: grade 2*

*Train to Gain*

*Good: grade 2*

11. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall and good for work-based learning. For learners aged 16 to 18, success rates on long courses have improved at all levels between 2004/05 and 2006/07 to around the rates for similar colleges. Both retention and pass rates have risen to around the national average. For adults, the increase in success rates in 2006/07 was marked, particularly at levels 2 and 3, and are now broadly satisfactory. For adults at level 1, the rise has been much slower than the national rate and remains well below that found in comparable colleges.
12. Headline success rates have improved in most sector subject areas; however, overall performance across the 14 curriculum areas was variable in 2006/07. In-year data suggest that many of the improvements seen in 2006/07 are set to be at least maintained for 2007/08. In-year retention and attendance rates are high.
13. Overall, students make the progress expected of them and standards of work are broadly average. In some subjects, such as engineering and health and social care, students make good progress and standards of work are high. The achievement of high grades has improved on many vocational courses and in many cases was significantly above average in 2006/07. The achievement of high grades on A level programmes remains low. Key skills success rates are satisfactory. The development of students' work-based skills is generally very good and effectively supports learners' future economic well-being.
14. The self-assessment report provides a broadly accurate evaluation of achievement and standards. However, the report's analysis of the performance of different groups of learners is not sufficiently detailed or evaluative. The success rates for most minority ethnic groups has been low since 2003/04. The success rates of some groups, for example learners of Pakistani and Indian heritage, are improving and the difference in rates is gradually closing between the college and similar colleges. However, for other groups improvements are less pronounced and robust action to deal with this issue is insufficient. From this academic year, the college has begun monitoring the performance of minority white groups such as learners from eastern European countries.
15. Overall and timely success rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships are good and well above the national average in 2006/07, particularly in construction. The rates improved between 2004/05 and 2006/07 with the exception of timely success rates on advanced apprenticeships. Most work-based learners make good progress. Success rates on Train-to-Gain programmes are high.



## Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

16. The quality of provision is good and agrees with the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. The college has made significant recent changes to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Early indications are that achievement and standards are improving in some areas as a result. The college's lesson observation system has improved significantly. It is largely accurate and enabled the college to identify and address with precision the developmental needs of teachers. As a result, the sharing of good teaching and learning practice is improving and is now widespread. In the most successful lessons, good planning ensures that teaching and learning caters for the needs of all those present. In these lessons, students have good study skills and make good progress. The teaching of key skills is satisfactory, but good when an integral part of vocational provision.
17. Teaching and learning in vocational practical lessons are good. Students enjoy their vocational work. Teachers challenge students to achieve well and most make good progress. For learners aged 14 to 16, these lessons are often good or better. They learn useful skills for progression and a very high proportion of these learners move into further education, training or employment.
18. Assessment practice is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. For work-based learners it is good. The marking of written work varies too much. In some very good examples, comments are detailed, helpful and clearly inform the student what they need to do to improve. In other examples, marking is cursory and does not always inform learners as to how to improve. Teachers do not correct spelling and grammar often enough. Well documented assessment of work-based learning takes place regularly and the monitoring of learners' progress is very good.
19. The identification of additional learning support needs is good. It is undertaken early, is accurate, and support is put in place promptly. However, the results of initial assessments are not always used consistently well in lessons to plan learning.
20. The college's provision of programmes and activities which meet the needs and interests of learners is good, as is its response to educational and social inclusion. The college offers multiple progression routes through a wide range of programmes. Learners benefit from programmes in many venues, including work places and a broad spectrum of community centres. Experienced staff liaise very well with employers, listen to their needs carefully, and identify training activities to support their businesses. The college works collaboratively with other education providers and the city council to target and support vulnerable groups, including those not in education, employment or training, teenage parents and young offenders. It offers a range of provision for learners who need to improve their English skills. For example, it has recently developed a class to teach English to Peterborough's Imams, helping them communicate effectively with young people. A varied cross-college enrichment programme includes supporting charities and activities in the wider community and provides

good opportunities for learners to make a positive contribution. The college has sufficient enrichment activities within courses, including visits and additional qualifications. Initiatives to encourage students to lead healthy lifestyles and to promote their general well-being are satisfactory.

21. Support and guidance are satisfactory overall. They are good for work-based learners and for pupils aged 14 to 16. The college has an enthusiastic centrally located team dedicated to the well-being of learners. The use of teaching assistants and support workers in lessons is very effective. Staff provide additional learning support sensitively, although the extent to which the college evaluates the success of this support is underdeveloped. Group tutorials are variable, with some well focused on the needs of learners and others less well structured. Managers do not monitor the quality of tutor records and reviews sufficiently. Targets arising from individual tutorials and progress reviews are often too general and fail to give learners specific and time-bound actions to improve. From these reviews, teachers do not receive enough detail to help them develop learners' study skills to match their individual needs.
22. Learners receive helpful initial information, advice and guidance in a welcoming centre at the college entrance. Staff use initial assessment and structured interview procedures to match learners to appropriate programmes. Once on programmes, learners have sufficient access to a range of careers and progression advice.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

*Contributory grades:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Inadequate: grade 4*

*Work-based learning*

*Good: grade 2*

*Learners aged 14 to 16*

*Good: grade 2*

23. Leadership and management are satisfactory. College managers and governors set a clear strategic direction that meets the key Learning and Skills Council (LSC) objectives and the needs of the local community and employers. Links with external organisations are good and the public profile of the college has improved. Many success rates increased markedly in 2006/07 to close the gap with other comparable colleges, although performance across the college is uneven. Communication with outside agencies is good. Internal communication is sometimes less effective.
24. Managers have strengthened the majority of quality assurance processes. The robust monitoring of teaching and learning and of regular evaluation of course performance is contributing to improved outcomes for learners. A strategic view of curriculum development has led to positive changes in those areas that have historically underperformed. The college recognises that some aspects of quality monitoring, such as the evaluation of tutorial provision, is underdeveloped. Self-assessment is well established. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process, valuing it and using it effectively throughout the year.

25. Equality of opportunity is inadequate. A number of events to celebrate diversity have taken place across the college. However, the monitoring of equality and diversity is not sufficiently coherent. The college does not meet all of its requirements of equalities legislation. Policies are in place but there is little positive action planning or subsequent monitoring of the implementation of action plans. Many of the developments within the curriculum areas are recent and at an early stage of development. In addition, there is insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity issues with apprentices.
26. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Checks are in place to ensure all staff can work with both young people and vulnerable adults.
27. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a good understanding of the issues facing the college. The working relationship between the chair and the principal is very good. The monitoring of data on student success by governors has been weak leading to management interventions that have been too slow. In addition the reporting to governors this year on enrolments and the meeting of targets has been less effective than in previous years.
28. Financial management is good. Room, equipment and staff utilisation are good. However, success rates are similar to comparable colleges and lower for some groups. Value for money is satisfactory.

## Learners' achievement

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	04/05	647	61	65	-4	1381	41	62	-21
	05/06	632	67	69	-2	982	46	65	-19
	06/07*	655	73	n/a		1096	53	n/a	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	74	73	68	5	2	100	64	36
	05/06	1	0	72	-72	n/a			
	06/07*	n/a				n/a			
NVQs	04/05	107	76	68	8	36	69	66	3
	05/06	116	76	72	4	12	75	74	1
	06/07*	108	79	n/a		9	89	n/a	
Other	04/05	466	55	64	-9	1343	40	62	-22
	05/06	515	65	69	-4	970	45	65	-20
	06/07*	547	72	n/a		1087	53	n/a	

\* college data

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	04/05	953	61	61	0	1475	55	60	-5
	05/06	1092	65	66	-1	1154	54	66	-12
	06/07*	1306	75	n/a		1102	71	n/a	
GCSEs	04/05	191	63	64	-1	162	58	63	-5
	05/06	238	67	68	-1	106	61	67	-6
	06/07*	341	72	n/a		139	66	n/a	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	125	66	67	-1	14	64	74	-10
	05/06	6	83	69	14	n/a			
	06/07*	2	100	n/a		1	100	n/a	
NVQs	04/05	208	59	57	2	247	64	61	3
	05/06	270	63	65	-2	334	51	68	-17
	06/07*	231	74	n/a		314	75	n/a	
Other	04/05	429	60	61	-1	1052	52	60	-8
	05/06	578	65	66	-1	714	55	65	-10
	06/07*	732	76	n/a		648	69	n/a	

\* college data

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	04/05	1470	57	68	-11	1150	59	58	1
	05/06	1448	60	70	-10	959	60	63	-3
	06/07*	1517	70	n/a		969	72	n/a	
A/A2 Levels	04/05	238	71	86	-15	110	64	69	-5
	05/06	237	81	87	-6	89	72	72	0
	06/07*	177	89	n/a		61	80	n/a	
AS Levels	04/05	609	49	66	-17	197	53	52	1
	05/06	573	56	67	-11	156	58	55	3
	06/07*	503	63	n/a		98	61	n/a	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	283	57	61	-4	35	69	54	15
	05/06	67	63	66	-3	3	33	57	-24
	06/07*	n/a				n/a			
NVQs	04/05	50	66	63	3	163	59	56	3
	05/06	48	85	71	14	117	74	63	11
	06/07*	26	73	n/a		113	86	n/a	
Other	04/05	290	62	60	2	645	59	59	0
	05/06	523	53	65	-12	594	56	64	-8
	06/07*	811	69	n/a		697	71	n/a	

\* college data

Table 4

Success rates on work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes managed by the provider/college 2005 to 2007.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No. of learners *	College NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate **	College framework rate **	National framework rate **
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	55	73	48	62	34
		timely	59	61	31	51	22
	05/06	overall	128	75	53	69	44
		timely	146	58	34	53	27
	06/07	overall	111	76	64	71	58
		timely	112	57	43	53	37
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	211	65	51	59	39
		timely	206	55	29	51	22
	05/06	overall	231	69	58	65	52
		timely	229	64	38	61	34
	06/07	overall	161	76	65	75	61
		timely	161	71	47	68	44
Adult training (long courses) ***	04/05	overall	31	65	56	0	0
		timely	54	28	39	0	0
	05/06	overall	10	40	61	0	0
		timely	10	40	42	0	0
	06/07	overall	1	0	65	0	0
		timely	1	0	48	0	0

Note 'At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006/07 had yet to be fully validated'

- \* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned
- \*\* College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

Table 5

Success rates on work-based learning 'Train to Gain' programmes managed by the provider/college 2007 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006-07	overall	154	90
		timely	154	90
	2007-08 (6 months)	overall	70	89
		timely	70	89

Note: 2007-08 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first 3 months or greater of the LSC contract year

- \* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned
- \*\* College/provider qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'
- \*\*\* Includes 'Train to Gain' long course NVQ provision, but not 'Skills for Life'

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